

our Nation. From Levittown to Lower Salford, no part of my district is left unaffected by this epidemic. Last year in Bucks County, opioid-related deaths rose by 50 percent. In Montgomery County, opioid overdoses claimed a staggering 240 lives.

Mr. Speaker, every fatality represents a family crushed by the overwhelming loss of a loved one. As lawmakers, we have the responsibility to act. Passage of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act and the 21st Century Cures Act were monumental first steps in countering the opioid crisis, but we must continue to press the issue from all sides, from the trafficking of narcotics across our border to preventing the overprescribing of painkillers.

Congress alone cannot solve this problem. We must be ready and willing to work with State and local leaders, law enforcement, healthcare professionals, and educators in our districts. We are all stakeholders in this challenge. Together, we can eradicate this epidemic, we can protect our families, and we can free our communities from this menace.

#### AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HECK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HECK. Mr. Speaker, it may be Valentine's Day, but I rise today to share a story of a Christmas miracle.

Now, this is little Gracie, and she was born on Christmas Day in 2015. Unfortunately, not too long after she was born, she was diagnosed with a respiratory virus. It is a very bad thing for little people because they have little lungs and little respiratory airways. Frankly, it can be extremely dangerous.

To make matters worse, she was snowed in at the hospital where she was born. She had to spend 5 days at the NICU before they could transport her to a children's hospital. When she finally did arrive at Seattle Children's Hospital, she had pneumonia, E. coli, and a collapsed lung. But, fortunately, little Gracie is a fighter, as was her medical team, and she made a complete and full recovery.

With coverage through Medicaid, her parents were able to focus on her care and her future. The financial stress of hospital bills that come with intensive care, a cardiac catheter, a life flight, and numerous medications was daunting, but it was not devastating.

Gracie's story is just one example of the difference Medicaid expansion through the ACA has made for millions of children throughout our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, when I am home, I hear these stories all day long about how the ACA has made a real difference in the lives of people. The ACA in my State expanded coverage to more than 750,000 people. In fact, this January, we hit record enrollment of 225,000 sign-ups. That is a 13 percent jump from last year.

The ACA is working for many people across America; but let's be honest: we have also heard the other stories from people who aren't seeing these gains. Instead, they are seeing higher premiums and increased medical costs in general, with little improvement in coverage. Those are legitimate concerns that Congress needs to address.

But whenever Congress makes major changes, such as Social Security or Medicare, or enacts big ideas, there will always be unexpected results in parts of the program that don't function as anticipated or designed. Our job is to follow up, see what works, and adapt accordingly going forward. Even the best laws are going to require some adjustment.

Let's do that. Let's do it the smart way, the American way, and work together to fix the parts of the ACA that need fixing while maintaining that which works. Repeal and replace is not the answer. It is not the answer. Working together to fix it is the answer.

As we continue—or begin—to work together, I hope we will remember Gracie and know that health care is not a miracle. Health care is the result of hardworking doctors, nurses, and healthcare professionals and a financially viable healthcare system and our actions here to support that in Congress.

We all come here for lots of reasons: philosophy, values, and ideology. We come here to represent our districts and their major components. I have the privilege to represent Joint Base Lewis-McChord, the largest force projection base on the West Coast, and many thousands of State employees—I have the State capital—who work every day to elevate the human condition of their friends and neighbors. We come here to represent the 672,554 people of our districts.

Mostly, I hope, however, that we come here to represent the Gracies of our districts. What I believe deep in my soul is that, if we will keep Gracie and the Gracies of our district in our hearts and foremost in our minds, if we keep them as our touchstone and our North Star, then America is going to be all right. I plead with you to do just that.

#### CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF SAVANNAH'S NAACP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the NAACP's Savannah branch. In July of 1917, James Weldon Johnson, field secretary of the NAACP, established Georgia's first NAACP branch in Savannah with 68 original members.

Similar to other NAACP branches, the Savannah branch pursues political, educational, social, and economic equality of minority groups and citizens. For the last 100 years, Savannah's NAACP branch has fought to eradicate

racial hatred and discrimination in the community. Its first meeting of 2017 was held on January 22 at St. Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal Church to install new officers and leadership.

I am proud to recognize today the branch's new officials, including President Al Scott, Vice Presidents W. Richard Shinhoster, Lynette Hymes, Barbara Magwood, Secretary Linda Carter, and Treasurer Joe Lang. I am confident in this leadership's ability to continue to uphold the values of the NAACP and help Savannah serve as an example to the nearly 75 NAACP branches Georgia has today.

REMEMBERING STETSON BENNETT, JR.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember a lifelong public servant, Mr. Stetson Bennett, Jr., of Jesup, Georgia, who passed away on Thursday, February 9, 2017, at 87 years old.

Mr. Bennett was born in 1929 to Reverend Stetson Bennett, Sr., and Irene Bennett in Wayne County. He graduated from Jesup High School in 1947, before attending Auburn University. Around this time, he also married his wife, Patsy Jones. They were married for more than 69 years.

Mr. Bennett first entered public service in 1949, as chief deputy clerk. By 1965, he was elected clerk of superior court and served nearly 50 years. Recognized by the Georgia House of Representatives as the longest serving constitutional officer in Georgia, Mr. Bennett has received a number of honors throughout his career.

His dedicated service earned him Clerk of the Year Award in 1985, the highest honor a clerk can receive. Fittingly, the award is now named in honor of Mr. Bennett. Perhaps his proudest achievement was when the citizens of Wayne County officially named the main courtroom the Stetson Bennett, Jr. Courtroom in honor of his years of service to the community he loved.

In addition, he served as the president of the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce, was an active member of the Lions Club, and helped develop Wayne Memorial Hospital as a member of its board.

Mr. Bennett was always proud of where he came from, which was clear from how selflessly he dedicated his life to Wayne County. He truly will be missed.

PRAYERS FOR LEIGH RYAN

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask for your thoughts and prayers for Mrs. Leigh Ryan, a Tybee Island mother of two who is battling an aggressive form of cancer.

Originally from Roberta, Georgia, Mrs. Ryan settled on Tybee Island 20 years ago to work as a nurse at Memorial University Medical Center. Since arriving on Tybee Island, giving back to the community has been a top priority for Mrs. Ryan, who is a member of Junior League and often works with the homeless in the area.